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SUBJECT: SECOND TECHDEL BOOTS UP BAGHDAD

REF: BAGHDAD 3074

¶1. Summary: S/P's Jared Cohen led a technology delegation to Baghdad from November 22-24 featuring Google CEO Eric Schmidt along with Silicon Valley venture capitalist Don Dixon, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace, and YouTube videographer Sophie Schmidt. The delegation came to Iraq to meet key Iraqi interlocutors and to laud the efforts made by Google and other companies to support the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) Sections IV and VII. Google and others have worked with USG and GOI over the past months to explore innovative ways to use technology to help preserve Iraq's rich cultural heritage, improve transparency in government, and help develop the IT sector in Iraq. End Summary.

¶2. The delegation of S/P Jared Cohen, Google CEO Eric Schmidt, Trident Capital CEO Don Dixon, former JCS Chair Peter Pace and Ms. Schmidt met with Foreign Minister Zebari (reftel), Deputy Prime Minister Eissawi, the Minister of Communications and General Odierno on November 22 to exchange views on how to improve Iraq's internet and technology industry. On November 23, the delegation met with troops on Camp Prosperity, participated in a roundtable with Iraq Technology Task Force (ITTF) members and finalists for the Iraq IT Interns program and attended a reception featuring 60 leading contacts from the business, cultural and political spheres.

¶3. On the final day of their visit, the delegation visited the Iraq National Museum. During short remarks at the museum, Google CEO Schmidt announced that Google had imaged all of the artifacts in the museum and that the images would be available to all browsers in early 2010. The USG-led effort to make the Iraq National Museum's artifacts available to all is in direct support of SFA Section IV to encourage cultural exchanges and cultural preservation.

¶4. The Google delegation's visit received wide attention in the Western and Arabic press. Almost all major television networks including the pan-Arab al Arabiya highlighted Google's collaboration with the Iraqi National Museum in an effort to help preserve Iraqi heritage using modern internet technology. The state-run al Iraqiya TV underscored the Museum Director's gratitude for the efforts of this collaboration, Ambassador Hill's statement that the visit was a sign of the U.S commitment to Iraqi cultural heritage and history, and the uniqueness of this project in the region.

Internet's "Virtuous Cycle"

¶5. Schmidt's repeated message to GOI interlocutors, students, and embassy officials was that internet access should be increased in urban areas where potential knowledge workers lived. If an urban university, with thousands of students and coffee shops nearby, were wired, a self-perpetuating "virtuous cycle" could be created. The cycle would begin when Iraqis created a business using tools readily available on the internet and perpetuated when others joined in as the potential for social and economic benefit became more and more apparent.

¶6. Comment: The fact that Google CEO Eric Schmidt visited Iraq is in itself a significant step forward toward attracting involvement from U.S. firms and underlines the effectiveness of USG efforts to engage IT companies. Next steps include capitalizing on this involvement through subsequent TechDels and continued outreach to the business community. On the cultural heritage front, the release of the thousands of images Google engineers took in early 2010 could spark heightened interest in Iraq's rich cultural treasures and boost the chances for further public-private partnership in support of USG goals as laid out in the SFA. End Comment.

HILL